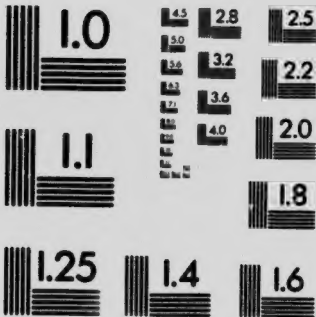


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THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THE PUBLIC FORESTS OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA.

HON. W. R. ROSS, MINISTER OF LANDS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

*(Address at the Fifteenth Convention of the Canadian Forestry Association,
Victoria, B. C., Sept. 5, 1912. Reprinted from the Report.)*

Perhaps the title of my address this morning might be taken as a narrowing of the scope of the convention by dealing with something of a local nature, but I think it will be a matter of considerable interest to members of the convention to know what we are doing in connection with our forests in the Province of British Columbia.

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION.

The forward movement for the systematic organization of forest work in this Province began with the appointment by the present Government of a Forestry Commission, consisting of Mr. Fulton, the Minister then in charge of the Lands Department, Mr. A. S. Goodeve, who has recently been appointed a member of the Dominion Railway Commission, and Mr. A. C. Flumerfelt, who I am glad to say is present with us today.

This Commission conducted a thorough enquiry into local conditions, ascertained what was being done in other parts of the continent, and submitted its recommendations as to the way in which our British Columbia forests should be managed in a report with which you are doubtless familiar. This report reached the Government somewhat over eighteen months ago, shortly after I had been invited to join the Cabinet as Minister of Lands, and the consideration of it was one of my first official duties. The session of 1911 followed immediately afterwards, and it was not until the spring that constructive work could be begun.

AN EMERGENCY MET.

The two main questions to be dealt with were the preparation of new legislation and the organization of a Forest Service, for both of which considerable time and thought were required. There was however a matter of immediate urgency—namely, the enlargement of the fire warden service for the dry season then approaching. The year 1910 had been disastrous throughout the west and though the greater part of our Province had suffered less from fire than many of the Western States, the appalling destruction in southern B. C. had opened our eyes to the need for vigorous action. For the season of 1911 the force of wardens was therefore doubled, the 110 fire districts were grouped into 10 divisions in charge of inspectors and these inspectors were supervised through offices established at Nelson, Vancouver, and Victoria. Money can be wasted more quickly through poor judgment in the fighting of a forest fire than in any other form of public work, and the only way to eliminate such waste is by frequent and active inspection. It was to the

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CANADIAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

increased supervision that we were able to give to the patrol force, and the larger number of men on duty, that the economical handling of our fires in 1911 was partly due, though of course the weather in most parts of the province helped us greatly as well. The 257 fires that we fought that season cost us only \$30,000; the upkeep of the patrol force costing another \$112,000.

PRELIMINARY WORK.

Forest protection for the current year having thus been provided for, the drafting of legislation and the search for suitable men for the staff of the future forest service were put in hand. This latter matter was one of considerable difficulty, for forestry is a profession that has only come to the front in recent years. The number of men who have taken it up is comparatively small, and it was by no means easy to find trained men who, in addition to their technical knowledge, possessed the sound judgment that comes from years of practical experience. Our forests have an immense importance to the Province from every point of view, and we felt that every possible effort should be made to secure the very best men available to manage them. After the most elaborate search, we had the good fortune last December to secure the assistance of Mr. Overton Price—Mr. Price as most people know being the man who organized the admirably efficient United States Forest Service in conjunction with Mr. Pinchot. In referring to Mr. Price I must express our great regret that a serious illness in his family prevents his attendance here today in his capacity of consultant forester to this Government.

THE FOREST ACT.

In January last the Forest Bill was introduced before the Legislature and formed one of the main features of the session. Containing as it does a revision of the numerous acts that previously had dealt separately with one feature or another of forest administration, together with a good deal of new material, it is a somewhat bulky document of over fifty pages, and I can do no more than direct the attention of the convention to one or two points that will be referred to in the course of this paper.

The Forest Act became law just six months ago, and created the new Forest Branch of my Department supported by a vote of \$160,000 which, with the \$230,000 contributed by the holders of timber licenses and leases, by owners of timber lands, and by the Government to the Forest Protection Fund, will bring the total sum available to \$390,000 for the present fiscal year.

THE FOREST BRANCH

Provided with legislative authority and the necessary funds, we set to work this spring to lay down the lines on which the new service could best be organized. It was decided, in the end, to divide it into four main sections—the office of Operation undertaking forest protection and land classification; the office of Management, handling timber sales, the supervision of logging, scaling the prevention of trespass and similar matters; the office of Records being in charge of all money matters, license and lease records, publicity, supplies and so forth; while the office of Surveys would be responsible for the general stock-taking of the forest resources of the province that we are so anxious to complete as soon as possible. Though experienced men to take over each of these sections had been secured and had been engaged in investigation work since April, it was June before the organization plans were finally approved, and mid-July before our Chief Forester had arrived and taken up his duties. You will therefore understand that I am unable at this convention to

point to what we have done in the way of field work or to give interesting information or statistics concerning our British Columbia forests. The work has been vigorously begun, and I can only tell you what we are doing and what we expect to achieve.

ORGANIZATION

Starting from the obvious truth that forest laws, regulations, government policies and all the varieties of office work connected with the forests are vain and useless theories unless there exists an efficient forest service to give practical effect to them in the field, we are concentrating our attention most of all upon the organization of such a service. Up to now there have been a number of independent staffs dealing each with a different form of forest work. For purposes such as the supervision of cutting, the collection of royalties, and the prevention of trespass, the Province has been divided into five parts; for scaling purposes into two; for forest protection during the past season, into fifteen. The timber inspection staff has had no connection with the forest protection service, nor the latter with the scaling staff; and a heavy percentage of working power has consequently been lost. Moreover, the staff concerned with forest protection has been a temporary one, engaged each spring and discharged each fall; a circumstance which has not been in the interest of steady development.

Our administration, in fact, is at the present moment in much the same disconnected condition as that of the federal forests of the United States prior to the introduction of the District System of organization under Mr. Pinchot in 1908; and we are now at work recasting it upon much the same lines as those which have proved so thoroughly effective in the United States. Plans are now being drafted for the amalgamation into one service of the present staffs, and for the cutting up of the Province into a number of convenient divisions, each of which will be a complete unit for every form of forest work. This plan will enable us to give far closer attention to the needs of each locality, and everyone who knows the woods will readily understand that one interesting result of closer inspection will be a substantial increase to the public revenue that will do a great deal more than offset any extra cost that may be incurred.

WORK IN PROGRESS.

As you know, nine million acres of forest in this Province are subject to cutting rights held by licensees, nearly three million acres more are under lease or in private ownership, while an unknown area, which we are beginning to think is much larger than has been hitherto supposed remains in reserve in the hands of the Government. No systematic examination of these enormous areas has ever been attempted, and yet until we know what timber we have got and where it is, we cannot tell whether our way of handling it is sound business. Moreover, quite apart from the forestry side of the matter, we need to find out where timber land ends and agricultural land begins in each district, and also where timber is standing on agricultural land, before my Department can tell how to deal with applications to purchase and pre-empt; and this information can only be obtained at present by the expensive and dilatory method of sending out men to make special examinations whenever the need arises.

These considerations show you why we are now beginning the stock-taking of our forest resources. At the present moment eight parties are in the field in charge of competent men, nearly all of whom began their careers by graduating either from the Toronto or the Oxford Forest Schools. The survey work is being concentrated at first, to some extent, in the regions north of the Railway Belt, that will

soon be opened by the new transcontinental lines of the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railways, in order that our forest maps of these regions may be available in advance of settlement. The general survey we are aiming to complete in a little over three years from now, and I need not point out how useful the results will be, not only for the administration of my Department, but also for operators, investors and the public generally.

OTHER WORK OF THE FOREST BRANCH

Since the end of 1907 no timber has been alienated by the Government and, while making provision for timber sales in the Forest Act last session, I was most anxious to avoid burdening the new staff with much detail work of this description during the important organizing period of this year. The only sales we are putting in hand at present are those of small bunches of timber that operators are anxious to take out while working on adjoining land, there being no question as to the desirability of disposing of those.

Another duty falling to the Forest Branch is that of land classification. We have such enormous areas in this province that are extraordinarily fit—and fit only—for the growing of timber that every effort should be made to cut out from our timber reserves, as soon as possible, all land suitable for agriculture. Forest assistants with technical training have therefore been assigned to the examination of cut-over timber limits and leases in order that our departmental action may be based on accurate information. Fraudulent attempts to secure timber lands under cover of the Land Act will be balked by similar examinations.

In the short time at my disposal I can but mention a few of the other matters that are receiving attention; for instance, the examination of certain regions in the interior where it is feared that the forest is failing to reproduce itself; the special study by trained men into the effects and defects of the log scales in use in the province; the publishing of reliable information that will advertise our British Columbia timbers and our forest industries; the study of waste in all its forms and the campaign of publicity that we consider the most valuable, in fact, the fundamental means of combatting the public carelessness that is chiefly responsible for the fire danger. And this, gentlemen, brings me again to that important phase of our work—forest protection.

THE FOREST PROTECTION FUND.

I have already mentioned the fact that we practically doubled the fire warden force for the season of 1911. The Government at this time was carrying on the work at the public expense, and it was very generally agreed that owners and holders of timber lands ought to be required to contribute their proper share. The Forest Act therefore established the Forest Protection Fund, to which all owners, lessees and licensees of timber lands are required to contribute, the Government putting up dollar for dollar. The standard levy is one cent per acre with the proviso that whensoever this proves insufficient to meet the annual expenditure there shall be an automatic increase to whatever figure may be necessary. We have found it desirable to create new fire districts during the present season, chiefly on account of the rapid settlement that is taking place in the regions north of the Railway Belt, and in consequence the inspection divisions have been increased from ten to fifteen; but owing to the frequent rains this summer, and the prompt attention

As the Railway Belt is constantly spoken of in this Report it may be explained that what is referred to is the strip forty miles wide (20 miles on each side of the Canadian Pacific Railway line) which was granted to the Dominion Government by British Columbia when the Canadian Pacific Railway was constructed through the Province.

that fires have received, the expenditure has been well within the amount available. By October 1st, forest protection will have cost this year under \$180,000. Refunds from Grand Trunk Pacific Railway of half of the expense of patrol and fire fighting in the regions traversed by their line and from the Canadian Northern Railway of all expense incurred in supervising their contractors will reduce the amount chargeable to the Forest Protection Fund by nine or ten thousand dollars and, as the income of the fund is about \$230,000, there will remain available for improvement work in the autumn a sum about \$60,000.

DISPOSAL OF DEBRIS.

I have watched with great interest the controversy that has raged in other Provinces and States as to whether operators should or should not be compelled to burn or otherwise dispose of lumbering slash. The solution adopted by us has been to leave the matter in the hands of the forest service which is empowered to deal with this slash at the expense of the Forest Protection Fund so as to favor the growth of the new crop of timber and to give it as much protection as possible against fire. This work and the clearing up of dangerous localities will necessitate a slash burning campaign in many portions of the province. Experiments already made by us in this line have proved most successful.

EDUCATION OF PUBLIC OPINION.

We are all conscious of the remarkable change that has taken place in public opinion with regard to forest fires. Ten years ago people in the West looked upon the burning of entire watersheds as a natural alteration in the scenery that went with railway construction, mining, or land clearing as a matter of course. There was a good deal of wagging of heads at such wholesale destruction, but the prevention or controlling of forest fires seemed to be too big an undertaking and there was consequently a general feeling of helplessness in the matter. That was so even five or six years ago. Today in this Province there is an outcry if precautions are not taken to prevent fires in places where dangerous conditions exist, and when fires occur people expect the fighting of them to be organized promptly, and look for just such money to be expended as the circumstances require.

Public opinion, in other words, has been educated to higher standards, and this result has been accomplished almost entirely by the steady publicity that forest protection has received through the Press, through public speaking, through the efforts of Forestry Associations, and through the enforcement of the permit law and other local work.

WASTE IN LOGGING

Six years ago we in this Province felt powerless to prevent the annual waste by fire; today we see our way with confidence. If one great problem can thus be solved, why not another? Today, for instance, each million feet of lumber manufactured on the Pacific Coast means the wholesale butchery of low grade material for which our operators can find no market. Other waste there is that is preventable, for example, the using of high class material in the woods for purposes for which inferior timber would suffice, and the cutting of lumber into even lengths only, on account of which trade practice investigation shows that 2 per cent is lost; but before the main problem of the low grade log we are as helpless today as we were regarding fire protection a few years ago. I look to co-operation between the operators of this Province and the Forest Service in order that this disease of waste that affects our forests may be studied as carefully as doctors study human diseases

and that every possible way of improving matters be discovered and made use of.

Time forbids that I should say more on this occasion and I will confine myself to emphasizing one final point. The Conservation movement has succeeded in making the public realize that, region by region, and State by State, many of the forests of this continent are being cut out. It is human nature for people to console themselves with the thought that the forests will last their time and that nothing much can be done.

I think that it is just here that the failure to give people a real interest in forest business has occurred. There have been too many glittering generalities; too much talk of benefitting posterity. Thus it comes that the average timber owner would as soon as think of allowing what he imagines is meant by 'forestry' to interfere with the practical handling of his limits as he would permit the science of Eugenics to dictate to him whom he should marry. He, and I am afraid the public with him, think of forestry as something theoretical, like German philosophy, that is out of touch with the hard facts of life today.

What we need to drive into the understanding of the people is that 'forestry' as we practise it means the scientific management of the Government's immense timber business, so that the citizen who would otherwise have to pay \$15. in taxes only has to pay \$10. so that in years to come the citizen will have to pay still less; so that while producing these effects on revenue the system of forest finance will be so adjusted as to offer the maximum of encouragement to the growth of the lumbering industry; and—above all other considerations—so that our forest capital, the source of our prosperity, may be preserved intact.

AT THE BANQUET

(Speech in reply to the toast to the Canadian Forestry Association)

I occupy to-night a dual position. It is my privilege to be one of the Vice Presidents of the Canadian Forestry Association and therefore one of the guests of the evening and on the other hand I occupy the position of Minister of Lands, and am to some extent, at least, responsible as one of the hosts of this evening's gathering. Consequently it is a difficult matter for me to decide which line I should take in responding to this toast, whether I should render thanks on behalf of the guests or whether I should extend further words of welcome on behalf of the hosts.

I was particularly interested in the striking statements just made by our Premier, and by other speakers with reference to the expansion of the forest industry which is expected to take place within the next few years. On account of my intimate association with the business of the timbermen, owing to my position as Minister of Lands, I think perhaps this phase of the matter comes home to me in a very emphatic way, and I can see the expansion which is bound to take place and the rapidity with which it is bound to occur.

The great extension in the last few years of the lumber industry, the presence of the pulp industry now as an active factor in our commerce, the early completion of the great transcontinental railway lines and of the Panama Canal make me feel keenly the responsibilities which fall upon the shoulders of those who are administering the Department of Lands in this Province. And it makes us feel that we must not limit our administration to the mere current business of the day, but

that we should also show some zeal in providing for those developments which are to take place in the very near future.

The forest service, with the duty of organizing which I am entrusted must not only carry out the routine of administration with efficiency, and absence of red tape, and an ambition to give the public the fullest and quickest information and assistance in timber matters, but it must also use good judgment in doing preliminary work, the results of which will be needed two or three years perhaps from now. British Columbia as an important portion (and the British Empire's portion) of the western American forest area is one of the world's last great reservoirs of timber. The future of one of the greatest wheat growing regions of the world will be tremendously affected by our success or failure in handling our forest wealth; practically the whole industrial and agricultural future of our great Province hinges upon this selfsame question.

Neglect of this vital matter would be criminal; unremitting study must be devoted to every phase of it. We must have men familiar with the best ideas of modern forest management men who can wrestle with the practical problems of every day administration without losing sight of the main aims and objects to which all such work should be directed, namely, the fullest use of the forest and the quickest, safest production of the next timber crop. Scientific observation and investigation to warn us of the danger ahead by throwing searchlight beams into the future must be carried on side by side with the rough and ready, capable common sense handling of current business in the office and in the woods. Thus and thus only shall British Columbia protect herself from the despoiling and debauchery of her forest capital and the ruin of her lumbering industry—a fate that has already overtaken some of the finest forest regions of North America, and that will soon engulf the prosperity of others; thus and thus only will our great future, spoken of to-night by our Premier, be fulfilled. It is the duty of our forest service to work and secure co-operation between the Government, lumbermen and public in this Province, so that our forests, still magnificently intact in spite of years of waste and fire, may support a permanent lumbering industry instead of being stripped and burned to barrenness while the present crop is being harvested.

We will not repeat the experience of so many older countries whose Ministers of Forests have been occupied for the last quarter of a century in buying back and reforesting at the cost of many millions annually the ruined areas that previous Governments should never have sold. As Minister in charge of Irrigation in this Province, I feel a double duty rests upon my shoulders to see that the perpetuation of our forests is not left to chance.

There is nothing spectacular in the work that has to be done. The essentials of success are a forest service staffed by capable men of the right type, in sufficient numbers; an annual expenditure that at the most need be but a modest commission on the annual revenue of two and three quarter millions, which that organization already collects; supervision directed towards increasing revenue, reducing cost of work and developing esprit-de-corps and the sense of public service among the men; and finally above all, the support of a strong Government policy, and the personal interest of the Executive. The great railroad corporations, departmental stores and manufacturing plants of this continent have shown what careful organization can achieve and it is my ambition to have the Government timber business run on the same lines of clear cut business efficiency.

But two weeks ago the election took place of the governing body of British Columbia's new university. I hope, gentlemen, that as has been done already with such success in more than one similar institution, —a school of lumbering will be made one of the conspicuous features of applied science in this university, in which

the native sons of our forest province will receive their training for the businesses they are to follow in after life. The present generation of lumbermen have mostly gained their knowledge in the good school of hard experience, but their sons, in presence of the great development in the use of complicated machinery, and the larger scale of modern operations, will need to prepare themselves to follow in their fathers' footsteps by studying the science of forest engineering. We require moreover a forestry school at which our young men may train themselves for the entrance examination that will be established for the Provincial Forest Service; and an auxiliary school at which our forest rangers may be taught what it is necessary for them to know concerning surveying, scientific cruising, the mechanism and upkeep of forest telephones, and similar forest matters.

In connection with this same school of forestry, I look for the equipment of an experimental plant for such matters as, for instance, tests of the strength of our principal timbers, studies of practical ways of making piles teredo-proof and railway ties rot-proof and all such useful matters.

With the data gained by this experimental work, the Forest Service will make a business of advertising our Provincial timber in the markets, and in the publications of the world. I can foresee the yellow pine of the Southern States going down before the conquering Douglas fir of British Columbia.

There is one other matter to which I should refer before I resume my seat. I ask you gentlemen why should British Columbia continue to be a mere producer of forest raw material: why should she be a mere hewer of wood that is shipped to other portions of the continent and the world for the use and profit of foreign manufacturers of wood products? Here is another field of study for the commercial branch of the Forest Province, namely, the investigation and publicity that will hasten the establishment of wood manufacturing industries right here where the wood is grown.

I have nothing more to say except this that as a Minister of the Government that has been to some extent responsible for the coming of this Convention to British Columbia and for its entertainment here this evening, I hope that the delegates in looking backwards on this Convention after they have gone to their homes, will feel that it has been one of the most successful in the annals of the Association.